

# Overview of the ADEPT System

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South Carolina's system for Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT) grew out of the knowledge that good teaching is fundamental to student achievement. Implemented statewide in 1998, the ADEPT system has become a vital part of the state's overall teacher quality initiative. In addition to achieving the minimum score or better on appropriate examinations on both content and general teaching area knowledge, as established by the State Board of Education, educators must successfully complete all ADEPT requirements in order to be eligible to advance to a professional teaching certificate.

Central to the ADEPT system is a set of expectations for what teaching professionals should know, be able to do, and assume responsibility for accomplishing on an ongoing basis. These expectations, known as the ADEPT Performance Standards, are the linchpins that connect all stages of a teacher's career. A teacher's proficiency in each of the standards is expected to occur developmentally and to increase continuously throughout the entirety of his or her teaching career.

The ADEPT Performance Standards (APSs) for classroom-based teachers were revalidated in 2005 by a statewide committee made up of teachers, district and school administrators, higher education faculty, and representatives from professional organizations. During this revalidation process, the committee's goal was to ensure that the APSs were consistent with current research and best practice. Following an extensive review of numerous national, state, and local teaching performance standards, including those from the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), the APSs were revised and placed online for statewide field review. Additional modifications were made, based on feedback from the field, and the finalized APSs for classroom-based teachers were approved by the State Board of Education in June 2006. Separate APSs for library media specialists, school guidance counselors, and speech-language therapists, respectively, were originally approved by the State Board of Education in 2003 and are slated for a later review cycle.

As its name implies, the ADEPT system addresses teacher performance through three primary processes: assisting, developing, and evaluating. Since these processes are interrelated, all of them occur in every phase of the career continuum. However, the emphasis placed on each process differs according to the needs and the career stage of the particular teacher.

During the first phase of their careers, candidates enrolled in teacher education programs focus on *developing* the requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions inherent in the ADEPT Performance Standards. ADEPT standards are among the state accreditation requirements for college and university teacher education programs.

Upon entering the profession, new teachers receive *assistance* designed to promote their successful transition into professional practice. Research clearly indicates that providing support to new teachers enhances their teaching performance, increases student achievement, and

improves teacher retention. Assessment at this stage is formative in nature, and development focuses on enhancing strengths and improving weaknesses related to the Performance Standards.

The third stage of ADEPT, formal *evaluation*, signals a dramatic shift in purpose. It is at this point that high-stakes, consequential decisions are made on the basis of teaching performance. Given appropriate preparation and support during the previous two stages, most teachers are successful in achieving the high level of performance defined by the ADEPT standards. Nonetheless, the formal evaluation process is an important part of quality assurance.

It is at the fourth and final stage, informal (goals-based) evaluation, that the ADEPT system comes full circle. Once again, the primary focus is on professional *development*, but in contrast to the initial stage, the responsibility for continuous professional growth now falls on the teacher. It is through this self-directed goals-based process that experienced, successful teachers are able to engage in lifelong learning and, further, to give back to the profession.